

IN THE CLAIMS:

This listing of the claims will replace all prior versions and listings of the claims in the application:

1. (Currently Amended) A Voice over IP (VoIP) telecommunications system, comprising:
a plurality of local VoIP networks serviced by local gatekeepers; and
a backup gatekeeper, said backup gatekeeper ~~adapted~~ configured to provide gatekeeper services to individual ones of said local VoIP networks if a local gatekeeper servicing one of said local VoIP ~~network~~ networks is not available;

wherein a router or proxy server determines if a local gatekeeper is available prior to routing a call request to the backup gatekeeper.

2. (Currently Amended) A Voice over IP (VoIP) telecommunications system in accordance with claim 1, wherein said backup gatekeeper is ~~adapted~~ configured to maintain local gatekeeper profiles in a database and access one of said local profiles when a corresponding local gatekeeper is unavailable.

3. (Currently Amended) A Voice over IP (VoIP) telecommunications system ~~comprising: in accordance with claim 2;~~
a plurality of local VoIP networks serviced by local gatekeepers; and
a backup gatekeeper, said backup gatekeeper configured to provide gatekeeper services to individual ones of said local VoIP networks if a local gatekeeper servicing one of said local VoIP networks is not available;

wherein said backup gatekeeper is configured to maintain local gatekeeper profiles in a database and access one of said local profiles when a corresponding local gatekeeper is unavailable; and

further comprising a proxy server ~~adapted~~ configured to direct call signaling to said local gatekeepers if said local gatekeepers are available and to said backup gatekeeper if said local gatekeepers are not.

4. (Currently Amended) A Voice over IP (VoIP) telecommunications system ~~comprising: in accordance with claim 2;~~
~~a plurality of local VoIP networks serviced by local gatekeepers; and~~
~~a backup gatekeeper, said backup gatekeeper configured to provide gatekeeper services to individual ones of said local VoIP networks if a local gatekeeper servicing one of said local VoIP networks is not available;~~
~~wherein said backup gatekeeper is configured to maintain local gatekeeper profiles in a database and access one of said local profiles when a corresponding local gatekeeper is unavailable; and~~
further comprising one or more routers, said one or more routers adapted ~~configured~~ to direct call signaling to said local gatekeepers if said local gatekeepers are available and to said backup gatekeeper if said local gatekeepers are not. [[.]]

5. (Original) A Voice over IP (VoIP) telecommunications system in accordance with claim 2, wherein said backup gatekeeper is provided by a Network Services Provider.

6. (Currently Amended) A telecommunications gatekeeper, comprising:
a control unit; and
a plurality of local gatekeeper modules corresponding to local gatekeepers associated with said telecommunications gatekeeper, wherein said control unit is adapted ~~configured~~ to select for operation individual ones of said local gatekeeper modules when corresponding ones of said local gatekeepers are ~~reported by a router or proxy server as being~~ unavailable.

7. (Currently Amended) A telecommunications system, comprising:
a plurality of voice over packet networks, each of said voice over packet networks having an associated local gatekeeper; and
a backup gatekeeper having a plurality of local gatekeeper modules corresponding to local gatekeepers and adapted ~~configured~~ to select for operation

individual ones of said local gatekeeper modules when corresponding ones of said local gatekeepers are unavailable; and

a proxy server or router configured to determine if a corresponding one of the local gatekeepers is unavailable.

8. (Currently Amended) A telecommunications system in accordance with claim 7, further comprising a proxy server ~~adapted~~ configured to route gatekeeper signaling to and from said backup gatekeeper if a local gatekeeper is not available.

9. (Currently Amended) A telecommunications system in accordance with claim 7, further comprising a router ~~adapted~~ configured to route gatekeeper signaling to and from said backup gatekeeper if a local gatekeeper is not available.

10. (Currently Amended) A telecommunications system in accordance with claim 7, wherein said backup gatekeeper is programmed to provide said local gatekeeper modules for service as a subscription service, said backup gatekeeper being provided at a location of a service provider.

11. (Currently Amended) A method, comprising:
monitoring whether a plurality of local gatekeepers are available; and
providing backup gatekeeper services from a backup gatekeeper if any of said local gatekeepers are determined by an associated router or proxy server to not be available.

12. (Original) A method in accordance with claim 11, said monitoring comprising a router determining if a local gatekeeper is unavailable and routing gatekeeper signaling to said backup gatekeeper in response thereto.

13. (Original) A method in accordance with claim 11, said monitoring comprising a proxy server determining if a local gatekeeper is unavailable and routing gatekeeper signaling to said backup gatekeeper in response thereto.

14. (Currently Amended) A method, comprising:
providing a plurality of local VoIP networks serviced by local gatekeepers; and
providing a backup gatekeeper, said backup gatekeeper ~~adapted~~ configured to provide gatekeeper services to individual ones of said local VoIP networks if a local gatekeeper servicing said local VoIP network is not available; ~~and~~
providing a proxy server or router configured to determine if a corresponding one of the local gatekeepers is unavailable.

15. (Currently Amended) A method in accordance with claim 14, wherein said backup gatekeeper is ~~adapted~~ configured to maintain local gatekeeper profiles in a database and access said local profiles when a corresponding local gatekeeper is unavailable.

16. (Currently Amended) A method ~~in accordance with claim 15,~~ comprising:
providing a plurality of local VoIP networks serviced by local gatekeepers;
and
providing a backup gatekeeper, said backup gatekeeper configured to provide gatekeeper services to individual ones of said local VoIP networks if a local gatekeeper servicing said local VoIP network is not available;
wherein said backup gatekeeper is configured to maintain local gatekeeper profiles in a database and access said local profiles when a corresponding local gatekeeper is unavailable; and
further comprising a proxy server ~~adapted~~ configured to direct call signaling to said local gatekeepers if said local gatekeepers are available and to said backup gatekeeper if said local gatekeepers are not.

17. (Currently Amended) A method ~~in accordance with claim 15, comprising:~~
providing a plurality of local VoIP networks serviced by local gatekeepers;
and

providing a backup gatekeeper, said backup gatekeeper configured to
provide gatekeeper services to individual ones of said local VoIP networks if a
local gatekeeper servicing said local VoIP network is not available;
wherein said backup gatekeeper is configured to maintain local gatekeeper
profiles in a database and access said local profiles when a corresponding local
gatekeeper is unavailable; and

further comprising one or more routers, said one or more routers ~~adapted~~
configured to direct call signaling to said local gatekeepers if said local
gatekeepers are available and to said backup gatekeeper if said local
gatekeepers are not. [.]

18. (Original) A method in accordance with claim 15, wherein said backup
gatekeeper is provided by an Internet Service Provider.